

**CITY OF BOULDER
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM**

MEETING DATE: March 17, 2010

AGENDA TITLE: Consideration of a motion to accept the summary of the February 23, 2010 joint Study Session regarding Urban Wildlife Management and the Open Space and Mountain Parks Grassland Ecosystem Management Plan.

PRESENTERS:

Jane Brautigam, City Manager
Paul Fetherston, Deputy City Manager

Community Planning and Sustainability Department

David Driskell, Executive Director
Susan Richstone, Comprehensive Planning Manager
Bev Johnson, Environmental Planner
Valerie Matheson, Urban Wildlife Conservation Coordinator

Open Space and Mountain Parks Department

Mike Patton, Director
Eric Stone, Resource Systems Division Manager
Mark Gershman, Environmental Planning Supervisor
Heather Swanson, Wildlife Ecologist

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The purpose of the study session was to provide council with an update and solicit feedback on:

- Urban prairie dog management;
- The Open Space and Mountain Parks Grassland Ecosystem Management Plan (Grassland Plan); and
- The Black Bear and Mountain Lion component of the Urban Wildlife Management Plan.

The study session was a joint effort of the Open Space and Mountain Parks (OSMP) and Community Planning and Sustainability (CP&S) departments. The CP&S department is responsible for developing and implementing the city's urban wildlife program. OSMP is responsible for setting priorities, developing strategies and taking action to manage the City of Boulder's Open Space and Mountain Park lands. A summary of the Study Session is included with this agenda item as **Attachment A**.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff requests City Council consideration of this matter and action in the form of the following motion:


Suggested Motion Language:

Motion to accept the summary of the February 23, 2010 Study Session regarding Urban Wildlife Management and the OSMP Grassland Ecosystem Management Plan.

NEXT STEPS:

Council will have an opportunity to review and approve a revision of the full OSMP Grassland Plan in the next few months. Council will also be kept informed as development of the Black Bear and Mountain Lion component of the Urban Wildlife Plan continues.

Approved by:



Jane S. Brautigam, City Manager

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A: February 23, 2010 Study Session Summary

ATTACHMENT A

February 23, 2010

City Council Study Session Summary

Urban Wildlife Management and the Open Space and Mountain Parks Grassland Plan

PRESENT:

City Council: Suzy Ageton, Matt Appelbaum, KC Becker, Macon Cowles, Crystal Grey, George Karakehian, Lisa Morzel, Ken Wilson, Deputy Mayor

Staff: Jane Brautigam, City Manager, Mike Patton, Director of Open Space and Mountain Parks, Eric Stone, Resource Systems Division Manager, Susan Richstone, Comprehensive Planning Manager, Bev Johnson, Environmental Planner, Mark Gershman, Environmental Planning Supervisor, Heather Swanson, Wildlife Ecologist, Valerie Matheson, Urban Wildlife Conservation Coordinator

PURPOSE:

The purpose of the study session was to provide council with an update and solicit feedback on:

- Urban prairie dog management;
- The Open Space and Mountain Parks Grassland Ecosystem Management Plan (Grassland Plan); and
- The Black Bear and Mountain Lion component of the Urban Wildlife Management Plan (UWMP).

OVERVIEW OF THE PRESENTATION:

Council was given short (overview) presentations on each of the above topics with time devoted following each for questions and commentary. Council provided both positive feedback on the knowledge and quality of the work from staff, as well as concerns and suggestions for improvements to all three portions. Specifically:

- Some council members conveyed a reticence to change regulations (Wildlife Protection Ordinance) or practices in a manner that might result in more lethal control of prairie dogs.
- Some council members expressed a desire to provide some additional flexibility in the criteria for prairie dog receiving sites in the Grassland Management Plan.
- Council would also like to see a more proactive approach in communications to the community relative to Black bear and mountain lion.

More specific feedback from Council is summarized below:

Urban Prairie Dog Management Policies and Proposed Revisions

Summary of Council feedback:

1. Financial

- a. Consider long-term costs of upcoming mitigation projects (Foothills Community Park) and barrier installation (verse continual removal).
- b. Continue to explore cost sharing and use of volunteers to reduce costs.
- c. Concern for the \$297,255 spent on urban prairie dog mitigation during the city's financially constrained times.

2. Policy and ordinance revisions

- a. Concern was expressed with an affirmative defense being added to the prohibition of using lethal means of control (6-1-11) immediately following relocation.

3. General urban prairie dog management

- a. Staff should be more active in changing the state restriction on relocation across county lines.
- b. It would be helpful to know how many prairie dogs there currently are in the city, and how many have been lethally controlled.

Open Space and Mountain Parks Department's Grassland Ecosystem Management Plan

While council members generally supported the overall ecosystem-based approach of the Grassland Plan, the integration of prairie dog conservation into the plan, and the quality of the plan; they had several reservations about specific provisions in the plan. And they recommended that staff consider a number of points to improve the plan:

1. Greater protection for prairie dogs

- a. Council members questioned how the plan would prevent extirpation of prairie dogs on open space.
- b. Members felt the plan should provide more than 340 acres for prairie dog protection.

2. Concerns about prairie dog relocations

- a. Most council members felt there was a need to provide greater flexibility when considering the availability of a site for relocation of prairie dogs. And they felt it was preferable to treat the more rigid criteria proposed in the plan rather as guidelines to address site-specific differences when considering receiving sites for prairie dog relocation. Other council members felt differently, in that they wanted

criteria that were clear enough so that there would not be a need to bring each relocation project to Council for evaluation.

3. Concerns about economic and environmental impacts from prairie dogs

- a. Two members thought the plan should consider treating prairie dogs as a species capable of degrading the land, and being cautious about the extent of relocation onto grasslands unaffected by prairie dogs. They also expressed concerns about the economic impacts of relocating prairie dogs.
- b. One council member thought the plan should not create a situation where OSMP lands are used as receiving sites whenever there are prairie dogs in need of relocation

Council Questions and Comments on the Black Bear and Mountain Lion Component of the UWMP

Summary of Council feedback:

1. Education and communication

- a. Think broadly and proactively on education (including Boulder Valley School District, CU). Education will need to be continual as our community is transient.
- b. Collaboration with the county and other adjacent land owners will be important.
- c. Would like the city to take a more proactive role in communication and working with the Division of Wildlife.

2. Trash and compost

- a. Consider trash and compost pick up schedules, and securing compost
- b. We need to know more about trash and its impact on bear so we are not solving the wrong problem.
- c. We will need to watch the compost program and continue to collect data as we move forward with options.